

THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 56

For people who care about Boston

May-June 2002

Rose Kennedy Greenway

Grandiloquent rhetoric has been expended about the Surface Artery after the elevated highway is demolished, but there are many misconceptions being implied by the rhetoric. For example, these diagrams show how small the new parks will actually be.

NORTH END

WHARF DISTRICT

CHINATOWN



Misconceptions about the Surface Artery Restoration

Misconception: Thirty acres will become available, of which 75%, or 23 acres, will become open space.

Fact: Only 8-9 acres of open space remain to be designed. The rest consists of small peripheral parcels, sidewalks, building frontages and areas already contracted for (Dewey Square and Portal Park and three Mass. Horticultural Society parcels). Overall, the Central Artery project is creating about 300 acres of parks.

Misconception: The corridor will be a continuous green belt.

Fact: The only continuous open space stretch is from Rowses Wharf to Christopher Columbus Park (about five acres) but the parcels are divided by high-volume cross streets. The Mass. Horticultural Society buildings between Dewey Square and the Moakley Bridge—counted as open space—will only be accessible by paying a fee.

Misconception: The parks will be large with many activities.

Fact: As the accompanying comparison shows, these are small parcels (0.9 to 1.4 acres), mostly smaller than one block of the Commonwealth Mall (1.25 acres). Not quite bucolic parks, they will be surrounded on four sides by heavy traffic.

Misconception: The proposed five- or seven member Trust to own, design and operate the Surface Artery corridor would isolate the corridor from political influence and ups and downs of budget cycles.

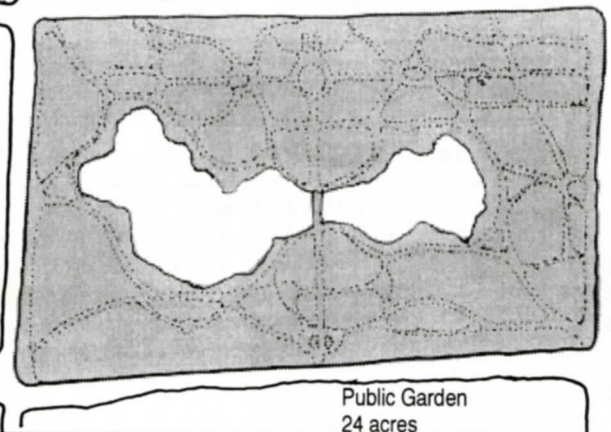
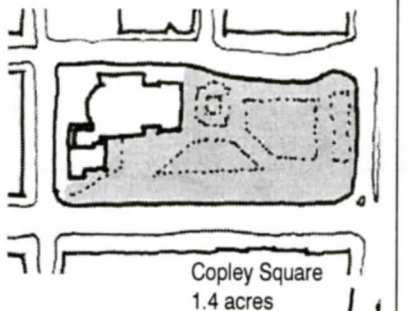
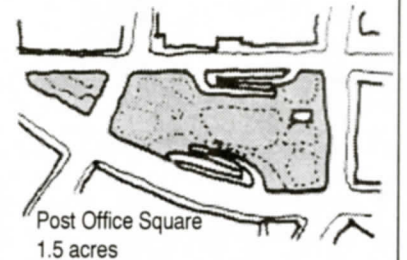
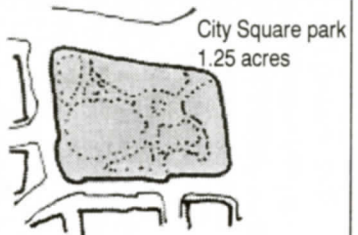
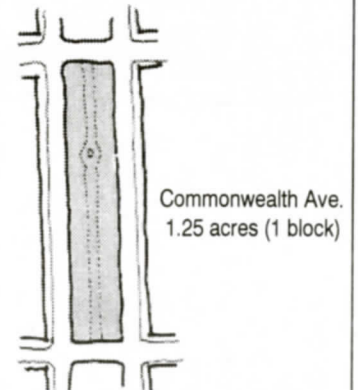
Fact: Other "independent" bodies such as MassPike and Massport are good examples of how this approach does not work. Anyway, if it were a good idea, all Boston parks should be under the Trust for the same protection.

More Fun Facts

Compared to Spectacle Island and the Bremen Street green space parcels in East Boston, the Surface Artery parcels are postage-stamp-size.

Spectacle Island (118 acres), part of the Boston Harbor Islands National Park, is 84 times bigger than the biggest Surface Artery parcel.

Bremen Street parcels are larger than all parcels shown on this page combined!



People Movers

Craig Coy, from executive director of HR Logic, Inc. of Wellesley (human resources company) to executive director of Massport. He was also deputy to Oliver North in the Reagan White House.

Linda Haar is on a one-year leave from the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) to be Loeb Fellow at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design.

Nancy Tentindo is on a one-year leave from the BRA to enter the Master's program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Peter Scarpignato has retired from the Boston Public Works Department but continues to provide consulting assistance.

Jordan Levy and **Christy Mihos** are back at the Mass. Turnpike Authority as Board directors.

Liz Levin, formerly vice-president of Rizzo Associates, is now consulting.

Paul Smith has left Rizzo Associates.

Robert Lepore, from Cambridge Systematics to AECOM Consulting, Virginia.

David Agnello, from Edwards and Kelcey to URS Corporation.

Clint Schuckel, from Vollmer Associates to Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates.

Chris Iwerks, from TAMS Consultants to HNTB Corporation.

Don Kindsvatter is leaving Wallace, Floyd Design Group to join Von Grossmann & Company

1 Surface Artery ramp Parcel 12 in the North End – This Central Artery parcel is scarred by two ramps from the underground Artery. The Boston 2000 Plan and City zoning, early 1990s efforts to establish uses along the Surface Artery, called for a building to cover the parcel and ramps. The 1991 certificate from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs stipulated that the ramps be covered. Clearly, the Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project would save money if the ramps are covered by a developer who will pay for a building.

In the past year, a growing number in the North End community and those abutting Parcel 12 have demanded that the CA/T project study the possibility of a park instead of a

building. Funds were obtained for the North End Central Artery Advisory Committee (NECAAC) to hire consultants to review alternatives. NECAAC interviewed several candidates and hired Weinmayr Associates Inc. and Sutphin Architects which produced several alternative concepts for buildings and parks. After a series of well-attended meetings, the community unanimously endorsed a park concept instead of a building for Parcel 12. Details of the park plan are now being developed by Weinmayr Associates.

Observers of the Surface Artery planning process are very interested to see if the community wishes will be respected by MassPike, the City and/or the proposed Trust to oversee the Surface Artery open space.

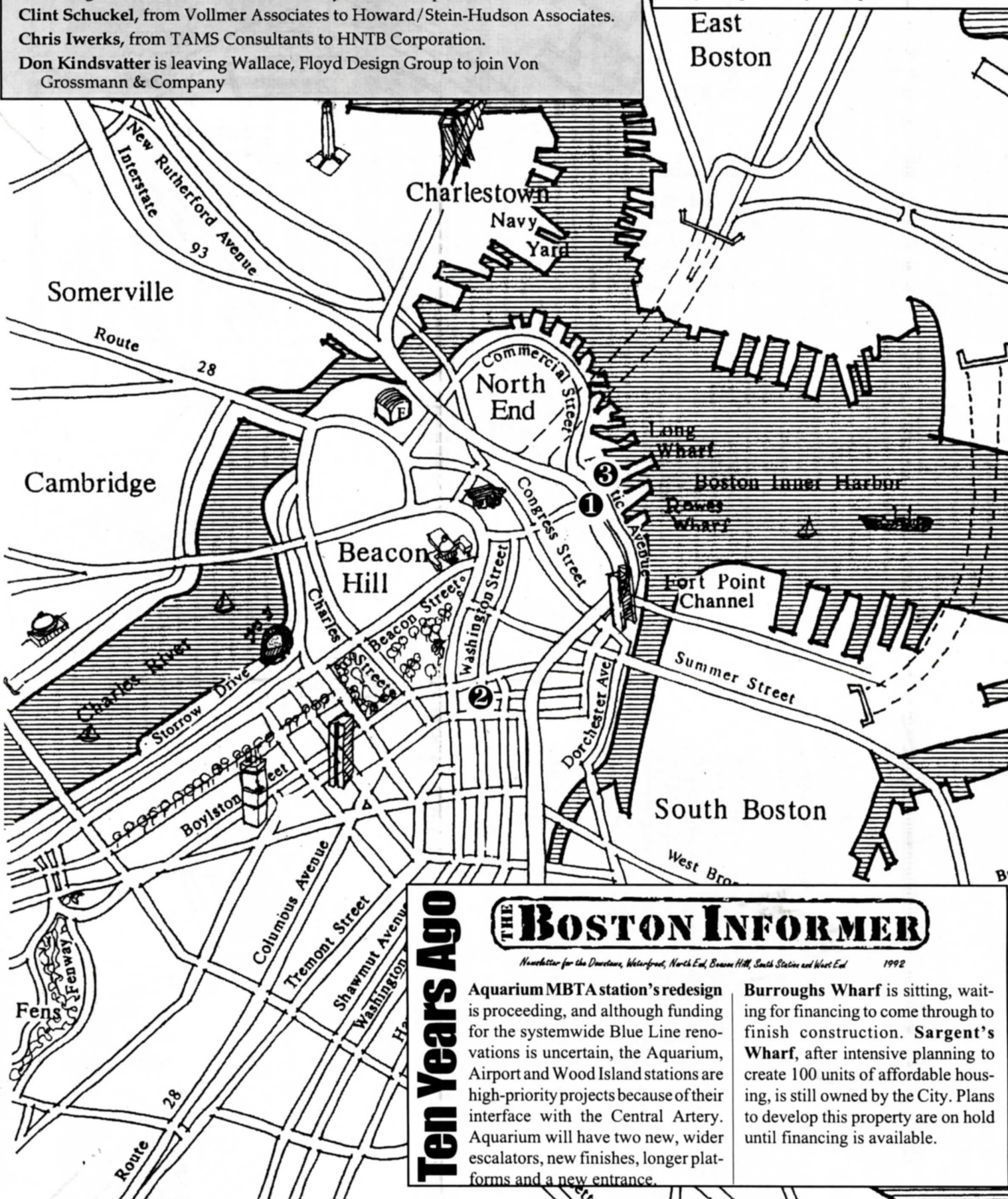
2 MBTA Circumferential Transit – MBTA plans to improve non-radial transit are proceeding with Phase 1 of three phases beginning. The MBTA's five-year study of circumferential transit ended mid-2001 with preparation of an expanded Environmental Notification Form (ENF) that set forth a strategy and schedule for a three-phase program of projects in the urban ring corridor. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs ruling on the ENF determined that no additional review was required for Phase 1, two new express and eight new crosstown (CT) bus routes. Phase 2, bus rapid transit and commuter rail interfaces, requires preparation of Environmental Impact Statement/Report, now underway.

The MBTA estimates that Phase 1 (expanded bus service), expected to be in place from 2001–2005, will have \$100 million in capital costs and \$23 million in annual operating costs. Phase 2 (bus rapid transit) estimates, 2006–2010: \$500 million capital, \$31 million operating. Phase 3 (light rail or heavy rail) estimates, 2010–2015: \$2.3 billion capital, \$56 million operating.

Ridership estimates for Phase 1 are 40,000; Phase 2, 106,000; and Phase 3, 282,000–293,000. Although new riders would number only 47,000 of 300,000 total daily riders, some 34,000 transfers would be eliminated and congestion in the central subway would be reduced.

3 Christopher Columbus Park on the North End Waterfront – Reconstruction of the park is proceeding on schedule, with reopening planned for fall 2002, maybe by Columbus Day. However, because of major cuts (\$17 million cut to \$14 million) in the City Parks and Recreation Department capital budget, the size of the planned maintenance building has been reduced. Space for neighborhood horticultural activities and maintenance administration was eliminated from the building.

Also, the proposed surface of the Walk to the Sea and the Harborwalk along the waterfront may be changed to the cheaper colored concrete instead of the brick surface originally planned. This proposed change is still under review.



Ten Years Ago

THE BOSTON INFORMER

Newsletter for the Downtown, Waterfront, North End, Beacon Hill, South Station and West End 1992

Aquarium MBTA station's redesign is proceeding, and although funding for the systemwide Blue Line renovations is uncertain, the Aquarium, Airport and Wood Island stations are high-priority projects because of their interface with the Central Artery. Aquarium will have two new, wider escalators, new finishes, longer platforms and a new entrance.

Burroughs Wharf is sitting, waiting for financing to come through to finish construction. Sargent's Wharf, after intensive planning to create 100 units of affordable housing, is still owned by the City. Plans to develop this property are on hold until financing is available.

Update on Boston's Boulevards

A 1996 joint initiative of the Boston Public Works Department and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Boston Boulevard Project's goal was to "create a plan that will connect neighborhoods, cultural amenities, open-space areas, business districts and downtown locations and better integrate them into the public realm." Boulevards were to be more pedestrian friendly with a "unique visual character."

Set to use state funds, the Boulevard Project originally included 11 roadways. To date, four have been completed. Here's a status report on the original boulevards:

Completed "boulevards": Brighton Ave., Commonwealth Ave. (Packard's Corner to Lake St.), Washington St./Cambridge St./Tremont St. (Allston), Hyde Park Ave. (Ukraine Way to River Street).

Under construction:

- **Merrimac St.** (North Station) will become two lanes in each direction.
- **Huntington Ave.** (Opera Pl. to Brigham Circle) includes upgrading the MBTA reservation for handicapped access to new low-floor vehicles and extensive landscaping. Parking from Opera Place to Longwood Avenue has been permanently eliminated.
- **Cambridge Street** (contract to be awarded imminently): Sidewalks and the median will be widened and a permanent parking lane will be created.

Delayed:

- **Commonwealth Ave.** (Packard's Corner to Kenmore Square)—split into two projects the portion from Kenmore Square to BU Bridge is likely to be advertised

at the end of 2002. BU Bridge to Packard's Corner continues to be delayed.

- **Massachusetts Ave.** (Storrow Drive to Albany St.)—Efforts to restore Chester Park in the South End by creating an underpass have been resolved (no underpass), but this project is still several years away.
- **Tremont St.** (Court St. to Boylston St.)—Planned to be done in conjunction with the MBTA's Green Line tunnel waterproofing project, the project was delayed when the MBTA's funding was eliminated. Plans are in the process of being revised.
- **American Legion Highway** (Blue Hill Ave. to Cummins Highway)—This tree-lined roadway needs a clear zone, according to Mass. Highway, and resolving the need to cut trees was the cause of the delay. Although resolved (the City will cut the trees), the project is several years away.
- **Tremont St.** (Boylston St. to Marginal Road, including portion of Boylston Street and Charles St. South)—Revised to include only Tremont Street in the Theater District, the City's proposed was never accepted by Mass. Highway and has essentially been dropped.

Pedestrian "boulevard" underway: Funded in 1997, closure of Dartmouth Street in front of the Boston Public Library has finally happened. The \$1.5 million project will extend the giant library sidewalk out the existing median that divides north- and southbound Dartmouth Street, closing southbound lanes forever. No trees or planters will be included on this new plaza area. Roadway changes include eliminating a pedestrian island at Boylston Street and new traffic signals.

Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*!

The Boston Informer is published by ATC Information, Inc., six times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

The Boston Informer is available by mail only. \$25.00 per year (cheap!). Questions? Telephone (617) 723-7030, fax (617) 437-1886 or e-mail: BostonInformer@cs.com.



Panic sets in as street furniture by Wall USA take over Boston sidewalks

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You Were Asking

Q. Why is a high-powered group that meets regularly at City Hall to discuss Central Artery surface restoration issues called the "Mayor's Central Artery Completion Task Force" when, to date, the Mayor has almost completely ignored it?

A. Louis XIV insisted French nobles live near his palace in Versailles so he could keep a close watch on them.

Q. The state legislature in a bond bill some years ago named the Surface Artery corridor the "Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway," presumably in the hopes that Senator Kennedy would get more federal money to fund it. Now that Sen. Kennedy publicly said (May 30, 2002) that there is no more federal money, can the name be reconsidered?

A. Yes. The name should be changed anyway since it was done without any public discussion.

Q. Is the final document of the Boston Transportation Department's Access Boston 2000 study a "fact book"?

A. Actually, the Transportation Fact Book is not the final document, but a collection of data that could be useful for a final policy document. The Fact Book, produced by CTPS for BTB, is jammed with facts and figures about Boston's transportation network and how residents in all the neighborhoods get around. Ideal for any data nerd. Call BTB at 617-635-4680 for copies.

Q. I keep reading (even in *The Boston Informer*!) about Fred Salvucci, ex-transportation secretary who has been working in academia for over a decade. Is he running for something or just looking for accolades?

A. Perhaps.

Q. I don't get it. For years, the main justification for connecting the MBTA Red Line and Blue Line at Charles/MGH was to simplify Red Line passengers' trips to Logan Airport. Now, Fred Salvucci says it's mainly so Blue Line riders can access jobs along the Red Line. What's this all about?

A. Revisionist history.



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